

# **Handbook on Alternate Assessment based on Alternate Achievement Standard**

**Updated February 2010**

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# Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR)

Federal law (IDEA 2004) and state law require that all students participate in Indiana's assessment system. For most students with special needs, this law requires participation in ISTEP+ with or without accommodations, end-of-course assessment, or an alternate assessment based on modified achievement standards. For students with the most significant cognitive disabilities, however, the case conference committee may determine that ISTEP+ is not an appropriate assessment instrument. In these cases, the alternate assessment, the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR), will be utilized to assess these students on alternate achievement standards.

ISTAR is the only alternate assessment that is recognized in Indiana for the purpose of statewide accountability. ISTAR is a Web-based system that utilizes teacher ratings to measure the progress of students assessed on alternate academic achievement standards in either mathematics or English/language arts that are appropriate to the student's achievement level, without regard to the student's age. Students who have a complete ISTAR assessment will count as participating in the assessment system for purposes of federal and state school accountability determinations. Although meant to be a continuous process throughout the year, ISTAR assessment ratings must be updated and completed during the time frame of March 1 through April 30 of each testing year. Only ISTAR assessment ratings that have been completed correctly and within the required time frame will be reported for the purpose of school accountability determinations.

## Assessment Windows for 2009-2010

Window	Dates	Administration Type
Spring	March 1-April 30, 2010	Online Administration

The decision that ISTEP+ is not appropriate, and that a student will be assessed only using ISTAR, should be based on empirical evidence of a severe cognitive disability, the intensity of instruction that is required to accomplish the most basic functions, and the selection of curricular outcomes that are best measured with functional achievement standards and academic standards other than age-appropriate, grade-level academic standards. The decision to exclude the student from ISTEP+ should not be based on excessive or extensive absences; social, cultural, or economic differences; the mere existence of an IEP; special education placement or services; emotional, behavioral, or physical challenges; anticipated scores on ISTEP+; or concern for local AYP calculations. Students who participate in ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+ are those who are not expected to receive an Indiana high school diploma. Performance on ISTAR alone will not allow a student to receive a high school diploma.

It may be determined by a case conference committee that a student would benefit from participation in both ISTEP+ and ISTAR. In this case, ISTAR is considered a supplemental assessment to ISTEP+, not an alternate to ISTEP+. Student performance, therefore, will be measured in ISTEP+ for the purposes of school accountability determinations. Assessment decisions made by the case conference committee must be documented in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP).

**In May of 2008, the Indiana State Board of Education approved two sets of criteria for student participation in the ISTAR assessment: Independent Functioning and Academic Competence.**

The Indiana Department of Education will utilize these criteria when reviewing or monitoring student education records for the purpose of determining eligibility to be assessed on alternate achievement standards and including alternate assessment data in federal and state accountability determinations.

## **Criteria for Determining Participation in the Alternate Assessment for Independent Functioning in lieu of the general education assessment**

*The SEA must establish and ensure implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for Case Conference Committees to apply in determining when a child's significant cognitive disability justifies assessment based on alternate achievement standards. 34 CFR 200.6(a)(2)(iii)(A)(1)*

The case conference committee (CCC) determines, based on the criteria provided and the student's individual and unique needs, whether a student with a disability will be assessed on academic achievement standards, on modified academic achievement standards, on alternate academic achievement standards for academic competence, or on alternate achievement standards for independent functioning. If the CCC determines that a student will be assessed on alternate achievement standards, the CCC report must describe the reasons it is not appropriate for the student to participate in the general assessment or the modified assessment and include information in support of each of the criteria below. The committee must be informed that the decision to participate in an alternate assessment means that goals describing grade-level proficiency typical of students who intend to receive a high school diploma will not be included in the student's individual education program.

**CRITERIA (All three criteria must be satisfied for a student to be eligible to be assessed on alternate academic achievement standards in either mathematics or English/language arts. In addition, the decision cannot be based on the exclusions provided below.)**

- 1. Presence of a Disability:** There is empirical evidence of a severe disability that precludes the acquisition of Indiana Academic Standards and a high school diploma.
- 2. Intensity of Instruction:** Even with extensive, intensive, pervasive, frequent, and individualized instruction in all settings, the student is unable to acquire, maintain, generalize, and apply academic skills across environments
- 3. Curricular Outcomes:** The goals and objectives listed in this student's IEP focus on progress within functional achievement indicators and extensions to the Indiana Academic Standards. The student strives to achieve the most basic self-help and communication skills and is seeking opportunities throughout the day to accomplish very individual goals.

## **EXCLUSIONS**

The CCC's determination that the student will be assessed on alternate achievement standards cannot be based on factors such as:

1. Excessive or extensive absences.
2. Social, cultural or economic differences.
3. The mere existence of an IEP or identification in a specific disability category.
4. A specific special education placement or service.
5. Emotional, behavioral or physical challenges.
6. Anticipated scores on ISTEP+.
7. Concern for AYP calculations.

## **Criteria for Determining Participation in the Alternate Assessment for Academic Competence in lieu of the general education assessment**

*The SEA must establish and ensure implementation of clear and appropriate guidelines for Case Conference Committees to apply in determining when a child's significant cognitive disability justifies assessment based on alternate achievement standards. 34 CFR 200.6(a)(2)(iii)(A)(1)*

The case conference committee (CCC) determines, based on the criteria provided and the student's individual and unique needs, whether a student with a disability will be assessed on academic achievement standards, on modified academic achievement standards, on alternate academic achievement standards for academic competence, or on alternate achievement standards for independent functioning. If the CCC determines that a student will be assessed on alternate achievement standards, the CCC report must describe the reasons it is not appropriate for the student to participate in the general assessment or the modified assessment and include information in support of each of the criteria below. The committee must be informed that the decision to participate in an alternate assessment means that goals describing grade-level proficiency typical of students who intend to receive a high school diploma will not be included in the student's individual education program.

**CRITERIA (All three criteria must be satisfied for a student to be eligible to be assessed on alternate academic achievement standards in either mathematics or English/language arts. In addition, the decision cannot be based on the exclusions provided below.)**

- 1. Presence of a Disability:** There is empirical evidence of a significant cognitive disability that precludes the acquisition of achievement standards necessary to obtain a high school diploma. However, there is evidence that the student could achieve academic competence at a basic level.
- 2. Intensity of Instruction:** Even when provided access to a differentiated general education curriculum, the student is unable to derive reasonable educational benefit without significant individualized modifications to content and performance expectations.
- 3. Curricular Outcomes:** The goals and objectives listed in this student's IEP focus on progress on academic skills that are prerequisites to the grade in which the student is enrolled. The student aspires to obtain skills necessary for entry level employment.

### **EXCLUSIONS**

The CCC's determination that the student will be assessed on alternate achievement standards cannot be based on factors such as:

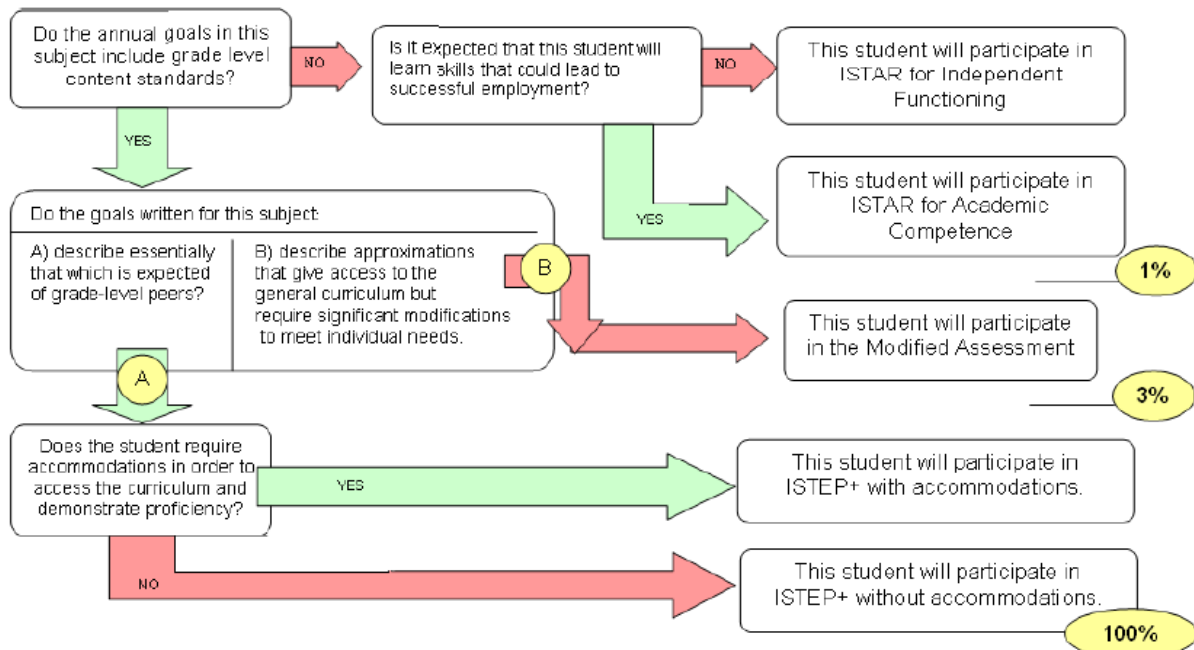
1. Excessive or extensive absences.
2. Social, cultural or economic differences.
3. The mere existence of an IEP or identification in a specific disability category.
4. A specific special education placement or service.
5. Emotional, behavioral or physical challenges.
6. Anticipated scores on ISTEP+.
7. Concern for AYP calculations.

## Criteria for Determining Participation in the State Assessment System through Alternate Assessments

Criteria	Alternate Achievement Standards for Independent Functioning	Alternate Achievement Standards for Academic Competence	Modified Achievement Standards for Grade Level Access
<b>1. Evidence of a Severe Cognitive Disability</b>	There is empirical evidence of a severe disability that precludes the acquisition of Indiana Academic Standards and a high school diploma.	There is empirical evidence of a significant cognitive disability that precludes the acquisition of achievement standards necessary to obtain a high school diploma. However, there is evidence that the student could achieve academic competence at a basic level.	The student receives special education services due to the presents of a disability. There must be evidence that the disability has prevented the student from achieving grade-level proficiency as measured by previous state test or other valid grade-level assessments.
<b>2. Intensity of Instruction</b>	Even with extensive, intensive, pervasive, frequent, and individualized instruction in all settings, the student is unable to acquire, maintain, generalize, and apply academic skills across environments.	Even when provided access to a differentiated general education curriculum, the student is unable to derive reasonable educational benefit without significant individualized modifications to content and performance expectations.	The student is able to meaningfully access curriculum for the grade in which the student is enrolled. However, the student's case conference committee agrees that, even with appropriate instruction and services designed to meet the student's individual needs, the student is not likely to demonstrate grade-level proficiency within the same time frame as peers.
<b>3. Curricular Outcomes</b>	The goals and objectives listed in this student's IEP focus on progress within functional achievement indicators and extensions to the Indiana Academic Standards. The student strives to achieve the most basic self-help and communication skills and is seeking opportunities throughout the day to accomplish very individual goals.	The goals and objectives listed in this student's IEP focus on progress on academic skills that are prerequisites to the grade in which the student is enrolled. The student aspires to obtain skills necessary for entry level employment. The student expects to earn a certificate of completion upon leaving high school.	The student is expected to earn a high school diploma prior to exiting high school, either by eventually demonstrating proficiency on the high school assessments or through the appeals process. Therefore the goals listed in the students individual education plan include content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled.
	The student expects to earn a certificate of completion upon leaving high school.		The student expects to earn a high school diploma.
<b>AYP</b>	<i>Up to 1% of the population tested can count as "proficient" through these two alternate achievement measures.</i>		<i>The number counted as "proficient" in all three columns cannot exceed 3%.</i>

## Testing Decision

The following flow charts and tables may be useful in determining the most appropriate state



The following chart captures the circumstances that may support long-term decision making.

Intends to earn a High School Diploma		Intends to earn a Certificate of Completion	
		Intends to gain skills that would lead to successful employment.	Intends to gain skills that would lead to increased independence.
The student strives to demonstrate grade-level proficiency for the grade in which the student is enrolled.	The student is able to meaningfully access curriculum for the grade in which the student is enrolled, but is not likely to demonstrate grade-level proficiency within the same time frame as peers.	Even when provided access to a differentiated general education curriculum, the student is unable to derive reasonable educational benefit without significant individualized modifications to content and performance expectations.	Even with extensive, intensive, pervasive, frequent, and individualized instruction in all settings, the student is unable to acquire, maintain, generalize, and apply academic skills across environments.
The annual goals listed in the student's IEP address the student's educational needs. If these needs include academics, the annual goals are written for the grade in which the student is enrolled.	The annual goals listed in the student's IEP include content standards for the grade in which the student is enrolled. Additional needs may also be addressed as well.	The annual goals and objectives/benchmarks listed in this student's IEP focus on progress on academic skills that are prerequisites to the grade in which the student is enrolled. The student aspires to obtain basic skills necessary for entry level employment.	The annual goals and objectives/benchmarks listed in this student's IEP focus on progress within the extensions to the Indiana Academic Standards and functional achievement indicators. The student strives to achieve the most basic self-help and communication skills and is seeking opportunities throughout the day to accomplish very individual goals.
ISTEP+ and End of Course Assessments	Modified assessment coming spring 2010 / End of Course Assessments	ISTAR for Academic Competence	ISTAR for Independent Functioning



## Indiana Assessment System

### Appropriate Testing for Students with Disabilities

<b>ISTEP+ without accommodations</b>	The General Assembly requires all students to participate in testing. Many students with disabilities are able to participate in ISTEP+ without accommodations.
<b>ISTEP+ with accommodations</b>	Appropriate accommodations may be provided for persons with disabilities in order to collect valid information on what the student is able to do. Approved accommodations, such as allowing for extended testing time, are listed in Appendix C of the ISTEP+ manual. These accommodations must also be provided routinely in classroom experiences.
<b>Modified grade-level assessment</b>	For students with aspirations to receive a high school diploma despite the inability to demonstrate grade-level proficiency at the same age as peers, the modified assessment gives access to grade-level content through easier instrumentation. In order to participate in this assessment, the student's I.E.P. must include goals that give access to grade-level content standards.
<b>ISTAR for Academic Competency</b>	Students with cognitive disabilities who have the potential to learn basic academic skills and who aspire to be employed upon graduation can participate in ISTAR for Academic Competency. This measure will assist in creating learning goals which are relevant to the student's individualized academic and functional strengths and needs. Students who participate in this assessment expect to earn a certificate of completion upon leaving high school.
<b>ISTAR for Independent Functioning</b>	For students with severe cognitive disabilities who are developing the most basic self-help and communication skills, the ISTAR for Independent Functioning provides the support team with assessment measures that capture progress toward living a more independent life. Students who participate in this assessment are seeking opportunities throughout their day to accomplish very individualized goals on their own.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

- I. General Description
- II. Participation Guidelines
- III. Administrative Responsibilities
- IV. Student Data
- V. Assessment Process
- VI. Scoring and Reporting
- VII. Use of Results
- VIII. Training and Professional Development
- IX. Research and Technical Information
- X. Contact Information

### **I. General Description**

#### **What is ISTAR?**

ISTAR is the culmination of previous state assessment projects, blending the best work of many professionals into a single, unified assessment. ISTAR is a web-based, standards-referenced assessment system designed and provided by the Indiana Department of Education, Assessment Division and Differentiated Learners Division.. It is available free of charge and can be used to monitor the progress of any student served in facilities throughout Indiana.

#### **Are there other alternate assessments that can be used for this purpose?**

No. Schools may use other assessment tools for local purposes. ISTAR is the only alternate assessment recognized by Indiana for the purpose of compliance with NCLB in the calculation of AYP as measured by both performance and participation rates.

#### **How does ISTAR differ from other assessments?**

Unlike most assessments, ISTAR is intended to be a continuous process of measuring student performance in authentic situations. The student does not “take a test.” Rather, ISTAR is a teacher rating instrument based on authentic evidence of student work samples.

#### **Are the ISTAR results aligned to the Indiana Academic Standards?**

The framework of ISTAR is intended to promote the greatest access to general curriculum possible at each grade level band (3-5, 6-8 and 9-10). By using the Core Standards as the frame for grade level content standards, the plethora of assessment elements were trimmed to include only those extensions which specifically align to the Core Standards for the grade level in which the student is enrolled.

## **II. Participation Guidelines**

### **How does a student participate in the ISTAR Assessment?**

ISTAR is an electronic progress monitoring system. It has been designed to utilize assessment ratings by professionals who know the student best. Teachers are instructed to base their ratings on observations, work samples, portfolios, and other sources of performance evidence. These ratings are tabulated to provide a score that not only can be used to compare against achievement standards, but can also measure individual progress from one year to the next.

### **Which students participate in the ISTAR Assessment?**

**Grade 3-10** - The case conference committee uses the criteria on pages 2 and 3 to determine if a student is eligible to Participate in the alternate assessment in lieu of ISTEP+. Since students who are assessed in ISTAR do not take end of course assessments, they will need to be assessed at both Grade 9 and Grade 10.

### **Who determines how a student will participate in the assessment system?**

**Students with disabilities:** The case conference committee determines the appropriate assessment instrument to be used with each individual student using the Indiana criteria for participation in an alternate assessment based on alternate achievement standards.

### **How does the Indiana Department of Education determine if a student is eligible to participate in ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+?**

Each student's case conference committee must determine if the student is eligible to participate in the ISTAR assessment (based on the criteria set by the State Board of Education) and must document this decision in the student's IEP. The state collects those assessments marked as *ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+* on the Student Record section of the ISTAR program. For corporations utilizing the case conference tool in ISTAR, ISTART7, the decision made within the case conference populates in the Student Record guaranteeing compliance. A random data and record review is conducted by the state to evaluate evidence of triangulation and alignment to determine if a student is eligible to be counted proficient as a student assessed in alternate assessment,

### **What is “triangulation” and “alignment”?**

- **Triangulation** refers to the presence of evidence in all three criteria. Exclusion information is also considered.
- **Alignment** refers to a consistent profile as evidenced through ISTAR ratings, multidisciplinary reports, present levels, goals, instructional support and other information recorded in case conference reports.

## **What are the criteria for determining participation in ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+?**

As delineated in the written guidelines issued by the Indiana Department of Education, the criteria is provided on page 2 and 3 of this handbook.

## **Is there a limit to the number of students who participate in ISTAR in lieu of ISTEP+?**

Only eligible student scores will factor in AYP calculations for the state assessment. Federal regulations limit the number of students who may be counted as proficient through an alternate assessment to 1% of the student in the grade levels tested per school corporation. Student can receive a not passing score on the ISTAR assessment (referred to as a Basic score), Passing score or a Pass+ score. If an ineligible student participates in the ISTAR assessment, his or her score will be counted as “not participating” for purposed of AYP calculations.

## **What is the legal basis for the inclusion of students with disabilities in the assessment process?**

**The 2001 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) known as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)** addresses the inclusion of students with disabilities in the state assessment system in several places:

34 CFR 200.6 Inclusion of all students: A state’s academic assessment system required under § 200.2 must provide for the participation of all students in the grades assessed.

34 CFR 200.6 (a)(1)(i): For each student with disabilities . . . appropriate accommodations that each student’s IEP team determines necessary to measure the academic achievement of the student relative to achievement standards . . . .

34CFR 200.6 (a)(2): The State’s academic assessment system must provide for one or more alternate assessments for a student with disabilities . . . . who the student’s IEP team determines cannot participate in all or part of the State’s assessments . . . even with appropriate accommodations.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA)** states:

20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(16): PARTICIPATION IN ASSESSMENTS

(A) IN GENERAL - All children with disabilities are included in all general State and district wide assessment programs, including assessments described under section 1111 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, with appropriate accommodations and alternative assessments where necessary, and as indicated in their respective individualized education programs....

(C) ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS

- i. IN GENERAL - The State (or, in the case of a district wide assessment, the local educational agency) has developed guidelines for the participation of children with disabilities in alternate assessments for those children who cannot participate in regular assessments under subparagraph (A) with accommodations as indicated in their respective individualized education programs.

- ii. **REQUIREMENTS FOR ALTERNATE ASSESSMENTS-** The guidelines under clause (i) shall provide for alternate assessments that—
  - I. are aligned with the State’s challenging academic content standards and
  - II. challenging student academic achievement standards; and
  - III. if the state has adopted alternate academic achievement standards permitted under the regulations promulgated to carry out section 1111(b) (1) of the
  - IV. Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, measure the achievement of children with disabilities against those standards.
- iii. **CONDUCT OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS-** The State conducts the alternate assessments described in this subparagraph.

In the upcoming calendar year, Article 7 will be amended to reflect the changes in the IDEIA. The current provision in Article 7 regarding state and local assessments reads as follows:

**Indiana State Board of Education Special Education Rules Title 511 Article 7 IAC 7-21-9 State and local assessments**

Sec. 9. (a) A student with a disability shall participate in state and local assessments, with appropriate accommodations in testing materials and procedures, unless the student’s case conference committee determines:

- (1) it is not appropriate for the student to participate in all or part of the assessment; and
- (2) an alternate assessment will be used to assess the student’s achievement.

(b) Testing accommodations for state assessment programs are subject to the program manual issued each year by the department of education.

(c) The student’s case conference committee shall determine, in advance, which appropriate accommodations the student needs in order for the assessment to reflect the student’s skills and knowledge base and shall document the accommodations in the student’s individualized education program.

(d) If the student’s case conference committee determines that a student will not participate in a state or local assessment, a description of the alternate assessment shall be documented in the student’s individualized education program.

### **III. Administrative Responsibilities**

#### **When does the ISTAR assessment and reporting occur?**

ISTAR assessment should be collected naturally and periodically throughout the year. Local reporting can occur at any point in the year for individual and local purposes. The state annually collects data entered or updated during the time frame of March 1 through April 30. ISTAR reports must be provided to parents and students in the same time frame as when ISTEP+ results are distributed.

### **Who is responsible for complete and accurate reporting?**

ISTAR ratings are completed by the educators who know the student best. They are typically completed by the student's teacher but may include input from the child's speech language pathologist or related service personnel who work with the student and the student's parents or primary caregivers. Administrators must verify that all reports are completed accurately and on time.

### **Who is responsible for students who are served out-of-district or out-of-state?**

For AYP purposes it is the school of service. For Indicator 3 purposes it is the school of legal settlement.

### **How do I know which assessments are complete and ready for state collection?**

The Compliance and Monitoring tab features a pie chart and compliance report displaying information relevant to the user. The ISTAR Compliance report will let users know which students are complete and incomplete during the ISTAR window. It will list name, teacher, school, birth date, grade, exceptionality, purpose, and criteria.

### **If a student moves, should I delete his/her records?**

The ISTAR record will be available to the receiving school district as soon as the student's STN is re-assigned. Student names can be removed without deleting any ISTAR history. This option can be used for students who graduate, move out of Indiana or your district, or move into ISTEP+. These students can be re-added by the district where the STN is relocated without any loss of information.

## **IV. Student Data**

### **Is the previous assessment data lost now that the design of the ISTAR assessment has changed?**

No assessment data is ever lost. The State of Indiana moved the annual testing window from fall beginning in the spring of 2009. This switch included improvements and a new design for the ISTAR system. Reports from the old version, "Classic" (assessments done prior to February, 2009), and reports from the new ISTAR design (finalized assessments during or after February, 2009) are available for teachers to create and print from the Student Record under the ISTAR Reports tab.

### **Who is responsible for adding/editing student names to ISTAR?**

A student can be added to ISTAR through any account that has access to the school where the student is associated. The student's record will "belong" to the account that initially added it until it is reassigned.

The management style is a local decision and the software is set up to work with either plan. However, it is ultimately the responsibility of the school leadership that student's are assigned to a teacher in an accurate and timely manner.

If a student is already added to the list of a different account, the user of this account must "reassign" the student to the receiving user.

## **How do I enter student information?**

On a nightly basis, the ICAN/ISTAR system is updated with the most current student information from the STN (Student Test Number) system. Therefore, continuous and proper use of the STN Lookup system is all that is required to populate the ICAN/ISTAR system with accurate student data.

The process of adding a student to the ISTAR assessment system is simply a matter of finding the correct student using the “add new” feature. All of the identifying data from the STN system will fill in the student data fields.

When a student transfer is registered in the STN system, the ISTAR7/ISTAR information follows the student to the new access point. Newly transferred students will be removed from the previous school district and will be available to the new district the following morning.

## **How are Student Test Numbers associated with given schools and school districts?**

All students must be assigned an Student Test Number (STN) in order to be assessed with ISTAR. The student test number has no substantive meaning in isolation. There is a protocol that local STN data administrators use to assign STN's to students, but this is for the sole purpose of creating a unique identifier. For the purpose of calculating school funding for grades K-12 and AYP for grades 3-10, the STN of any given student will be associated with the current school building of attendance in a given district. Security access and ISTAR data tables rely on the current school association within the STN system.

The important requirements are: 1) There is only one STN is assigned per student, 2) the STN must be associated with a school, and 3) the rater must have access to the student either by having access to the school where the student account is associated, by receiving additional access for any individual student, or by the reassignment of the student from a past rater to account of the receiving rater.

## **How is confidentiality of student records assured?**

Before a user is able to log into the ISTAR program, they must indicate that: “The School Corporation has determined that I am, by definition, a school official who has legitimate educational interest in reporting and accessing ISTAR data. I am aware of my obligation to respect the confidentiality of student records as defined by the Family Educational Records Privacy Act (FERPA).” A website that explains this federal law is linked to the login page.

Anything entered into the software system is encrypted. The network server maintains this encrypted data which cannot not be read without specified access to the interface. Access to student records is controlled by the location of the account and the level of access that is established for that account, which is regulated by the creation and monitoring of user accounts at the local administrative level. Without a legitimate log-in there is no access to the information which is considered by industry standard to be more secure than traditional paper files in a file cabinet.

Any access of student records is logged and this table of access can be retrieved at any time by an administrative account. It is the responsibility of the LEA to maintain the confidentiality of electronic records in the same manner as if the records were in a file cabinet in an office.

As with any web-based system, security is dependent on access rights, not the physical location of the server. The ISTAR system resides at the Indiana Department of Education but the structure of the software and the parameters of state and federal law protect individual identities.

## **V. Assessment Process**

### **Why was the ISTAR assessment designed changed?**

Although the items that made up the ISTAR instrument were direct derivatives of the standard indicators and therefore exceptionally comprehensive, the items were organized by grade level with the assumption that lower grades were “aligned” to subsequent grades. This assumption underwent scrutiny and was determined to be only partially true. The ISTAR score inadvertently included items in these learning progressions that were particularly aligned only to lower grade levels. Even though the assessment contained items that concurrently would be considered extended standards and would align to details of lower grade levels, the performance score was identified in terms of the lower grade level on the assessment reports. The representation of skills as “off-grade level”, as reported in ISTAR, has been specifically prohibited by federal guidance documents.

The resulting reorganization of the framework is intended to promote the greatest access to general curriculum possible at each grade level band (3-5, 6-8 and 9-10). By using the Core Standards as the frame for grade level content standards, the plethora of assessment elements were trimmed to include only those extensions which specifically align to the Core Standards for the grade level in which the student is enrolled. Additionally, rather than ISTAR being a single instrument with multiple levels, which has also been specifically discouraged by federal guidance, ISTAR was redesigned to have variance relative to each of the grade bands following the Core Standard framework

### **Who enters the assessment data?**

ISTAR ratings are to be completed by educators who know the student best. The assessment ratings are typically done by the teacher but may include input by therapists, other teachers, and parents or primary caregivers. Teachers are instructed to base their ratings on observations, work samples, portfolios, and other sources of performance evidence.

### **What is assessed in ISTAR?**

A student is assessed in the areas of Math and Language Arts in grades 3-10, Science in grades 4 and 6, and Social Studies in grades 5 and 7. Each areas is made of performance threads. The performance threads are made up of progressive skills presented as rows of boxes. The teacher selects all skills/boxes per performance thread that best represent the students mastery in each area.

## **VI. Scoring and Reporting**

### **How are ISTAR scores reported?**

It is the minimum expectation that ISTAR reports be provided to parents in the same time frame as when ISTEP+ reports are distributed. Individual ISTAR reports can be printed at any time for local use. The Office of Student Assessment is collaborating with the Learning Connections to create an ISTAR report similar to the ISTEP+ student report.



Annual school and school district AYP reports include measures of ISTAR participation and proficiency calculations. Data tables are accessible through the DEL Dashboard using secure administrative accounts. Aggregated data that does not contain personally identifiable information is posted on the ASAP website: <http://www.doe.state.in.us/asap/welcome.html>

### **How are proficiency levels determined for Alternate Assessment?**

As with the ISTEP+ proficiency levels, the Indiana Department of Education annually determines ISTAR proficiency levels. The federal government requires cut scores on the alternate assessment that mirror the achievement level descriptors in ISTEP+. An ISTAR Assessment Standard setting committee made up of general and special educators, administrators and curriculum specialists met in December, 2009. Indiana Department of Education assessment content specialists and alternate assessment specialist are drafting new performance level descriptors incorporating the committee's recommendations which will then be sent for adoption by the State Board of Education.

## **VII. Use of Results**

### **How are ISTAR results used?**

Each year on April 30th , the **Indiana Department of Education** retrieves and archives the data for analysis and AYP calculations.

**Local districts:** Data can be used to identify staff training needs and program goals.

**For individual students:** ISTAR assessments can provide the data for educational decision-making with respect to curriculum and instruction. In addition, the data can assist the case conference committee in forming IEP goals and objectives.

### **Can ISTAR be used over multiple years?**

New reports are being designed with the potential to monitor individual student progress over multiple years. These reports are to be available in the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.

## **VIII. Training and Professional Development**

### **How will school personnel be trained?**

WebEx trainings have been scheduled for new directors, new teachers and experienced users in February. The ISTAR AA list-serve has been created and teacher who administers the ISTAR alternate assessment and administrator who oversee teachers who use this application were invited to join. Updates to the programs, IDOE memorandums and training opportunities will be posted through this list-serve.

The ISTAR manual, and step by step instructions handouts are available for immediate viewing and use from <https://ican.doe.state.in.us/COMMON/help/Reference/icanref.html>. WebEx sessions will be recorded for later viewing.

## **IX. Research and Technical Information**

### **How were the ISTAR assessments developed?**

The Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners in conjunction with the Purdue University Assessment Research Center developed the Indiana Assessment System of Educational Proficiencies (IASEP) approved by the State Board of Education in 1998 for use with students with the most significant disabilities. IASEP was the alternate assessment for the state during the 1998 - 2002 school years.

Building on this previous work, the Indiana Department of Education, Division of Exceptional Learners received approval from the State Board of Education for the current alternate assessment, the Indiana Standards Tool for Alternate Reporting (ISTAR) for use beginning in the 2003 – 2004 school year. The framework for ISTAR begins with the Indiana Academic Standards.

Many groups of individuals representing special education and early childhood teachers, administrators, universities, Head Start, speech-language pathologists, child care providers, families, English language minority representatives, and professional organizations participated in developing and improving the progress indicators for children from birth through age five referred to as Basic 1, Basic 2, Foundation 1, and Foundation 2.

During the summer of 2008, a committee of experts representing university personnel, subject matter educators, administrators, parents, and teachers of students with the most significant cognitive disabilities met to design the assessment for science and social studies. The committees were given a set of the Indiana Academic Core Standards for each grade where the subject was tested in the general assessment. This included grade 4, 6, and 10 for science and grades 5 and 7 for social studies.

From this work, matrices of performance level descriptors were created. The resulting reorganization of the framework is intended to promote the greatest access to general curriculum possible at each grade level band (3-5, 6-8 and 9-10). These assessments were field tested during the spring assessment window of February 1 through April 30, 2009.

An ISTAR Assessment Standard setting committee made up of general and special educators, administrators and curriculum specialists met in December, 2009. Indiana Department of Education assessment content specialists and alternate assessment specialist are drafting new performance level descriptors incorporating the committee's recommendations which will then be sent for adoption by the State Board of Education.

**Are the ISTAR assessments valid and reliable?**

Following a peer review process and a review by the U.S. Department of Education, Indiana's standards and assessment system received full federal approval with recommendations in June of 2006. This signified that ISTEP+ and ISTAR met all statutory and regulatory requirements of Title I / NCLB based on the documentation presented, including validity and reliability evidence. Studies will continue to ensure the technical soundness of the ISTAR instrument.

**How can I access ISTAR tools?**

If you are an employee within a public school system in Indiana, the ISTAR software system is already available within your district. Beginning in 2003, Superintendents, Directors of Special Education, and LEP Coordinators were given ISTAR administrative accounts which have the capability of creating and monitoring administrative and teacher accounts.

**What if I am from a private school?**

If your school participates in ISTEP+, the students will already have STNs. To acquire access in cases where your school has yet to participate in ISTAR; an administrator must fax a signed request on school letterhead to the Office of Student Assessment (317.233.2377). The owner of the genesis administrative account can subsequently create and manage teacher accounts within that private school.

If your school does not participate in ISTEP+ or receive special service support from a public school system, and therefore your students do not have STNs, the use of this technology will require special arrangements with the Indiana Department of Education. For more information, please contact the Division of Data Analysis, Collection and Reporting at 317.232.0808

## **X. Contact Information**

**Who do we contact if we have additional questions?**

General information, ISTAR Training/Support	Karen Stein Alternate Assessment Specialist	kstein@doe.in.gov 317.234.2377
ISTAR KR	Sally Reed Crawford ISTAR KR Assessment Specialist	scrawford@doe.in.gov 317.234.5596
Special Education Regulations	Dawn McGrath Coordinator of Special Education	dmcgrath@doe.in.gov 317.232.0570
ISTEP+ and AYP	Michele Walker Director of Student Assessment	mwalker@doe.in.gov 317.232.9050
STN (Student Test Numbers)	Information Technology Division	www.doe.state.in.us/stn 317.232.0808
ISTART7-IEP	Jolly Piersall ISTART7 Specialist	jpiersall@doe.in.gov 317.232.9114

The vision of ISTAR is driven by a collaborative, ongoing dedication to the inclusion of ALL students in meaningful, purposeful and continuous assessment, instruction, and accountability.

Web-based technology, training materials and professional support are provided by the **Indiana Department of Education**,



<http://www.ican.doe.state.in.us>